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Capitalism and Unemployment

THE EDITORS

Work and Unemployment

HARRY BRAVERMAN

Lucia: Style and Meaning in Revolutionary Film

STEVEN KOVACS

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CONTENTS | VOLUME 27 | NUMBER 2 | JUNE 1975

REVIEW OF THE MONTH: Capitalism and Unemployment by the Editors 1
A LOOK BEYOND 1975 by V. Lewis Bassie 15
WORK AND UNEMPLOYMENT by Harry Braverman 18
LUCIA: STYLE AND MEANING IN REVOLUTIONARY FILM
by Steven Kovacs 33
BOOKS: Comrade George by James Cockcroft 50
A Valuable Study of Imperialist Domination by James Petras 55
An African Novel of Liberation by Susan Kaplow 57

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NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

This month it is our sad duty to report the deaths of two MR Press authors and of an old friend and supporter going back to the early days of the magazine.

Julio Alvarez del Vayo, last Foreign Minister of the Spanish Republic, for ten years editor of the (New York) *Nation*, and author of *China Triumphs*, published by MR Press in 1964 (and now out of print), died in Switzerland in early May. A Spanish friend of ours and his, who was present at the funeral, pays eloquent tribute in a letter dated May 8 from which we quote:

"Don Julio was buried yesterday surrounded by a few dozen of his friends, political and personal. There were Communists and Socialists, Chinese and Mexicans, Chileans and veterans of the International Brigade, Spaniards and Swiss. He who died celebrating the triumph of the Cambodians and of the Vietnamese had to die in exile, but until the end his body was draped in the flag of the Spanish Republic for which he fought, as Foreign Affairs Minister and as Commissar for War. But in the cold Swiss morning other flags of the Spanish Republic were raised in homage: the flags of the FRAP of which he was Chairman to the last day of his life. It was magnificently typical that Don Julio had become, at 85 years of age, the leader of the youngest and the farthest-left group in Spain."

(*Continued on inside back cover*)

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CAPITALISM AND UNEMPLOYMENT

At first glance it might seem that the labor supply or labor force is a very simple concept, and indeed this is the case in a rationally planned society, one in which the producers themselves are in control of what and for whom goods and services are to be provided. There the problem is obviously how to make best use of the ability and need to work of the *entire* population, due regard being paid to differences in age and physical capacity.

But when we turn our attention to a capitalist society, matters are very different. The problem is no longer what can be realistically accomplished with existing human and natural resources to satisfy the people's physical and spiritual needs. Rather it is what kind and size of labor force capital requires to maximize the production and realization of surplus value, and to this question there is no simple or unambiguous answer. About all that can be said with assurance is what Marx was the first to discover over a hundred years ago: "Capitalist production can by no means content itself with the quantity of disposable labor power which the natural increase of population yields. It requires for its free play an industrial reserve army independent of these natural limits." (*Capital*, Kerr ed., vol. 1, p. 696) And in the same vein:

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But if a surplus laboring population is a necessary product of accumulation or of the development of wealth on a capitalist basis, this surplus population becomes, conversely, the lever of capitalist accumulation, nay, a condition of existence of the capitalist mode of production. It forms an industrial reserve army that belongs to capital quite as absolutely as if the latter had bred it at its own cost. Independently of the limits of the actual increase of population, it creates for the changing needs of the self-expansion of capital a mass of human material always ready for exploitation. (*Ibid.*, p. 693)

Under these conditions, the labor force consists of two parts, the employed and the unemployed, with a gray area in between, containing the part-time or sporadically employed. Furthermore, all these categories of workers and potential workers continuously expand or contract with technological change, the ups and downs of the business cycle, and the vagaries of the market, all inherent characteristics of capitalist production. Thus the whole problem of the size and composition of the labor force under capitalism is in the nature of the case complicated and confusing; and to this must be added the fact that the official and unofficial spokesmen of capital have every interest in making it still more complicated and confusing in order to help conceal the frightful costs and irrationalities of a system of production for profit instead of production for use. In interpreting available data we therefore have the difficult task of trying to disentangle truth from material we know to be at best of doubtful accuracy and at worst riddled with distortion and deception.

The Deception of Averages

Official figures on unemployment, those issued in government press releases and reported in the newspapers, are mostly averages which are adjusted by statistical legerdemain for "seasonal" ups and downs in the number of job openings. Averages, however, can be very deceptive. Unemployed individuals are not averages, and the number of workers actually experiencing unemployment is significantly higher than the officially reported averages. In 1973, for example, the *average* number of employed was 84.4 million, while the number who *actually worked* all or part of the year was 100.2 million, i.e.,

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almost 20 percent higher. The other side of the coin is that while the average unemployment rate in that year (near the top of a business-cycle upswing) was 4.9 percent, the proportion of workers experiencing one or more spells of unemployment during the year was no less than 14.2 percent! (*Manpower Report of the President, April 1975,* pp. 274, 276.) As will be explained presently, this figure is a gross underestimate, but even so it provides a dramatic illustration of how the form of presentation of statistics can obscure the content. The averages give an impression of a stable situation throughout the year, one described in the orthodox textbooks by the soothing term "equilibrium" (high-unemployment equilibrium, low-unemployment equilibrium, etc.). The data on individual workers' experience, on the contrary, shows us a moving picture of continuous violent expansions and contractions in both the employed and the unemployed segments of the labor force.

Further evidence on the real nature of employment under capitalism is provided by more detailed data on the work experience of persons 16 years of age and over during 1973, near the peak of a period of capitalist prosperity. Taking all the people who worked for some time during that year, we find that only 57 percent had year-round, full-time jobs (defined as those who worked at least 50 weeks during the year at the same place of employment). It is natural that this percentage should be less than 100 percent. We know, for example, that about 15 percent of those employed voluntarily worked part-time. In addition, some turnover is to be expected as a result of retirement at old age, illness, and voluntary job changes. Yet these reasons could hardly account for the fact that as much as 43 percent of the working force was not employed at year-round full-time jobs. This becomes clearer if we compare work experience in different industries, since turnover due to such reasons as retirement and illness should be pretty much the same in most industries. (See Table 1, p. 4.)

That these relatively low percentages are due to lack of year-round jobs rather than to idiosyncrasies of workers can be seen from the relatively high percentages in some sub-groups not shown in Table 1. In the categories "other public utilities" (largely electric power) and "chemicals and allied pro-

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ducts," over 80 percent of the work force was employed year-round, while in "automobiles," "primary metal industries," and "railroads and railway express," the percentages ranged between 75 and 80. But for the working population as a whole, as already noted, only 57 percent had year-round jobs. Of the remaining 43 percent, to repeat, some worked part-time because they preferred to (but not necessarily because they didn't need full-time jobs, as in the case of working mothers who had no day-care centers available), others retired (not all because they wanted to or could afford to, but because of lack of job opportunities for older workers), while some dropped out because of illness.* But for many, if not most, of the non-full-timers their life was one of hopping from one job to another, including one or more periods of unemployment during the year.

All this is of course the inevitable product of a social system geared not to the satisfaction of the *needs* of people but to the *use* of people for the aggrandizement of capital. In Marx's words, quoted above, capitalism "creates for the changing needs of the self-expansion of capital a mass of human material always ready for exploitation." Ignoring this most fundamental

Table 1

Selected Industries	Percent of Wage and Salary Earners in Each Industry Who Worked Year Round at Full-time Jobs in 1973
Agriculture	46.8%
Construction	51.1
Manufacturing	68.9
Transportation and Public Utilities	73.0
Retail Trade	38.9
Finance and Services	62.1

Source: *Manpower Report of the President, April 1975* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), p. 275.

* A number of those who dropped out because of illness may also represent a form of unemployment resulting from work experience. As reported in the *New York Times,* May 12, 1975, a federally financed medical survey found that diseases suffered by three out of every ten workers were caused by work conditions. This is a minimum estimate based on those diseases that can unquestionably be identified as occupationally induced.

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characteristic of the society they are supposedly analyzing, bourgeois economists and statisticians proceed on the implicit assumption that irregularities in employment are part of the God-given order of nature which must be eliminated by such statistical devices as averaging and seasonal adjustments in order to get at the "true" level of unemployment.* In this way they hide the grim facts of the capitalist labor market: that for a large number of workers only temporary, intermittent, and insecure jobs are ever provided; and on the other hand that private enterprise depends on always having a large reserve of labor available to supply its needs when demand is brisk, to be discarded promptly when demand slackens off.

Overestimating the Number of Employed

There are two ways in which official labor-force statistics systematically overestimate the amount of employment. The first has to do with the treatment of part-time work. In current estimates of employment, for example, some four million workers are included who on the average work about half a week, not because they want to but because they cannot get full-time jobs. (U.S. Department of Labor, *Employment and Earnings*, April 1975, p. 37.) This is equivalent to 1.7 million full-time unemployed (See Table 3, p. 11).

The second systematic overestimate of employment relates to the inclusion of unpaid family workers. Government data show that in 1973 there were over 700,000 unpaid family workers in agriculture and over 900,000 in non-agricultural enterprises. (*Manpower Report of the President, op. cit.*, p. 274.) Some of these are doubtless in the "unpaid family worker" category not because they are really receiving no compensation for their labor but because of the way the family in a male-

* It is also routinely assumed that a substantial amount of unemployment is "normal," in the sense of being necessary to contain inflation and keep the system on an even keel. Twenty-five years ago most economists would have put this "norm" in the 3-to-4 percent range. Nowadays it would be more like 5-to-6 percent, and it will doubtless drift upward as the economy sinks deeper and deeper into stagnation. By the end of the decade of the 1970s it may well be that "full employment" will be defined as 10 percent unemployment.

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dominated society receives and distributes its income. But it is no less reasonable to assume that a significant portion of these people are really what are usually called "disguised unemployed," i.e., people who are unable to find a job and eke out a livelihood through shining shoes, selling matches, etc. An alternative possibility in some cases is to help out on the family farm or in the family store, sharing in what is usually already the meager family income.

The Subemployed

Closely related to the disguised unemployed is another much larger category of workers who may be called the "subemployed," i.e., workers who are employed at wages below, and often much below, the "official poverty line" (in Marxian terminology, workers whose wages are less than the value of their labor power). This poverty line was placed by the Social Security Administration in 1970 at $4,200 a year for a family of four. Yet in 1972, two years later, there were no fewer than six million full-time workers counted in the official statistics who earned less than two dollars an hour, which means that if they worked 40 hours a week for 50 weeks they would earn less than $4,000. These six million workers were clearly below the poverty line (especially considering the rise in prices between 1970 and 1972) and many were far below it.* Doubtless many of these people could without unduly stretching the concept be included in the disguised unemployment category; and yet for the great majority, so classifying them would be misleading. They are employed in the full sense of the term, i.e., they are workers who receive wages and produce surplus value, and as a group they constitute a permanent part of the labor force. Above all, and unlike the disguised unemployed, from

* On this and other aspects of sub- and underemployment, see the valuable article by Thomas Vietorisz, Robert Mier, and Benjamin Harrison, "Full Employment at Living Wages" in *The Annals*, March 1975. It should be added that the six million figure is by no means a measure of the total number of people living below the poverty line, since it does not take into account poverty among part-time workers, retired persons, the unemployed, the disabled, the self-employed, those on welfare rolls, etc.

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the point of view of capital they are absolutely indispensable for the very existence of a huge number of capitalist enterprises which in the aggregate play an important part in the functioning of the capitalist economy. The extent of this importance can in no way be measured by their own income or by that of their employers, many of whom are petty capitalists who themselves live little if any better than workers. For what has to be kept constantly in mind is that these workers are employed in highly competitive branches of an increasingly monopoly-dominated economy. The result is that a large part, and perhaps most (there is no way of measuring), of the surplus value *produced* in these competitive industries is *drained off* and *realized* in the monopolized sectors of the economy. Nor is this the only reason why this substandard and superexploited part of the economy is important to big capital. The existence of a large number of low-wage workers who are always ready and anxious to move into better-paying jobs if any are available acts as a drag on the bargaining power of the better-paid workers in the monopolized sectors of the system. In this sense the subemployed, without ceasing to be part of the active labor army, function as part of the reserve army or the relative surplus population of which Marx said: "Relative surplus population is . . . the pivot on which the law of supply and demand of labor works. It confines the field of action of this law within the limits absolutely convenient to the activity of exploitation and to the domination of capital." (*Capital, op. cit.*, p. 701)

Underestimating the Size of the Labor Force

The converse of the overestimates of employment which were discussed above is the minimization of the size of the labor force. While at first glance it might seem that a statistical measure of the labor force would have independent and objective validity, the fact is that it is a statistical construct into which enter many subjective elements and value judgments in the various stages in the process of construction. And here the narrow and timid outlook of the specialists blends with the practical politics of the policy-makers who fear the implications of a true measure of the volume of unemployment. What

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results is the strange and ironic phenomenon of a declining labor force precisely when more workers lose jobs and the recession deepens. Thus, an article in the *New York Times* of March 9th, headlined "The Labor Force is Shrinking Drastically," reports with a straight face:

> The Federal Government's latest figures show unemployment unchanged for the first time in months. . . . There was a decline of 540,000 in the number of people at work in February, but the unemployment rate remained static because about 580,000 already jobless persons stopped looking for work last month, in many cases because they felt there were no jobs to be found. Thus the government did not count them statistically as unemployed.

This sort of statistical sleight-of-hand is not always as successful in concealing the growth of unemployment as it was for last February, but it has worked over the years to obfuscate the measurement of the labor force and hence the number of unemployed. The key is the use of a restricted definition of unemployment, as can be seen from the following description of how the numbers are derived. The official government estimates of unemployment are compiled from monthly investigations of a sizable sample of families around the nation (the Current Population Survey). Field investigators question a representative of each family studied (usually the adult found at home) about the employment status of each member of the family 16 years of age and over. Based on the answers given to the investigator, each member of the family counted is classified into one of three groups: employed, unemployed, or not in the labor force. (The sum of the first two, the employed and the unemployed, is the labor force estimate.)

The decision as to who should be classified as employed is pretty clear-cut, apart of course from the built-in biases, some of which were discussed above. But the separation of the remainder between "unemployed" and "not in the labor force" raises many thorny problems, especially in view of the way a capitalist economy generates alternating expansions and contractions of the labor market and capital's ever-present need to maintain an adequate labor reserve. The solution chosen by the government specialists is to count as in the labor force only those who are actually employed or are reported as having

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engaged in a specific job-seeking activity during the four weeks preceding the time of the survey. And all those who are not employed or who have not recently looked for a job (including those who have not looked because they know very well that jobs are not to be had) are by this definition not in the labor force. Using this method, the Current Population Survey conducted in April of this year reached the conclusion that 8.2 million persons were unemployed. This represented 8.9 percent of the official labor force—the highest reported rate since 1941, when it averaged 9.9 percent for the year as a whole.*

How Many Really Unemployed?

When one probes more deeply into the underlying data of the Current Population Survey, however, it is not difficult to discover how inadequate the current estimates of average unemployment are (leaving aside here the question discussed above about the difference between averages and individuals). What we discover is that among the people labelled "not in the labor force" in the first quarter of 1975—and hence not counted as unemployed—there are over 5 million persons who answered "yes" when asked: do you want a regular, full- or part-time job *now*? These 5 million (or members of their families who answered for them) were then asked the reasons for not looking for work. The classification of the reasons is given in Table 2 (p. 10).

The 1.1 million who were not looking for a job because they didn't think they could get one (line 4 of Table 2) are often referred to as "discouraged workers." It is hard to

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* Fuller material on current techniques for measuring the labor supply, as well as an excellent critical examination of these methods and their implications, is to be found in a recent issue of *The Annals* (March 1975) devoted to "Planning for Full Employment." In addition to the article cited in the preceding footnote, the following articles from the same issue of *The Annals* are worthy of careful consideration: Bertram M. Gross and Jeffrey D. Straussman, "'Full' Employment Growthmanship and the Expansion of the Labor Supply"; Stanley Moses, "Labor Supply Concepts: The Political Economy of Conceptual Change"; and Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr. and Charles A. Thrall, "Counting the Jobless: The Impact of Job Rationing on the Measurement of Unemployment."

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Table 2

Reasons for Not Looking for a Job	First Quarter 1975 (in millions)
School Attendance	1.5
Ill Health, Disability	0.7
Home Responsibilities	1.2
Think Cannot Get Job	1.1
Other Reasons	0.8
Total Persons Not Included in Labor Force but Who Want a Job Now	5.3

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, *Employment and Earnings,* April 1975, p. 57.

figure out by what rules of reason these persons are not to be considered unemployed. And surely many others, if not all, of those who specifically said they wanted a job *now* are in truth unemployed. Among those reported to be at school (which includes vocational training) are many who went back to school precisely because they could not find a job, as well as others who are finishing their scheduled education but who need the income from full- or part-time employment.

One might assume that ill heath and disability are sufficient reasons for not being included in the labor force. Why then do 700,000 in this category say they want a job now? Could it not be that among them are disabled persons able to perform productively but who are not seeking work because jobs are scarce and employers discriminate against them? Could it not also be that in this category are people who are ill or recuperating from illness, which is why they did not actively beat the bushes in the labor market, but who nevertheless currently want and need jobs?

The next line of Table 2 (people who want a job but are not looking because of home responsibilities) consists almost entirely of women. And they probably fall into two groups: those with young children at home and those with an ailing adult in the family needing attention. Here the absence of day-care centers and the lack of visiting nurses are the problem. But are the individuals who want a job but are prevented

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from seeking one because of insufficient social services any the less unemployed?

Although there are many areas of possible doubt about the exact status of these more than 5 million job-wanters excluded from the unemployment count, it is still possible to use these data to arrive at an approximation of a more meaningful estimate of the current volume of unemployment: we need only approach the problem in a conservative way. With this in mind let us exclude all those who want a job but say they are in school and those who report ill health and disability. However, we will include in the estimate of unemployment those who want a job but are not looking because of home responsibilities, those who believe they cannot get a job, and the "all other" catch-all category. In addition, we will add to the unemployed the full-time equivalent of those workers who wanted to work full-time but could find only part-time work. And we will make no other adjustment for the overestimates of employment discussed above. Using this compromise (and we believe very cautious) approach, we arrive at the following estimate of unemployment for April of this year:

Table 3

	Millions
(1) Officially reported unemployment	8.2
(2) Persons wanting a job, but not included in the official count of unemployment[a]	3.1
(3) Adjustment for those involuntarily working part-time[b]	1.7
Total unemployment	13.0

(a) Excludes those wanting a job, but who reported that they were not actively looking for work because they were at school or ill. These data are for the first quarter of 1975, the latest date for which this information is available. In the light of recent trends, however, this is most likely an underestimate of the situation in April 1975.
(b) The full-time equivalent unemployment of those working part-time (an average of 22.5 hours a week) but who want full-time work (40 hours a week).

If, for purposes of comparability, we add line (2) of Table 3 to the official labor force estimate, we find that the 13 million represent a more realistic *13.6 percent of the labor*

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force unemployed instead of the official 8.9 percent. And it should be stressed that the 13.6 percent is still an understatement, due to the conservative nature of the assumptions we made.*

The Outlook for the Next Decade

The data on employment and unemployment, if understood properly, reveal an important phase, yet hardly the only one, of the failure of U.S. capitalism. We have seen, on the one hand, the extent of job insecurity even at the peak of prosperity, and, on the other hand, how much the volume of unemployment has grown at this stage of the recession. It is equally important to understand that this failure to provide jobs and job security is hardly likely to evaporate. On the contrary, all indications are that it is going to get worse in the years ahead.

In this space in the March and April issues of MONTHLY REVIEW we discussed at length current trends in the U.S. economy, presenting reasons for believing that the country is once again entering a period of stagnation comparable to that of the 1930s. Our purpose here is not to repeat what was said earlier but simply to demonstrate how powerfully existing and projected labor-force statistics buttress this conclusion. We ask how many net new jobs would be needed between now and 1985 (1) to reduce unemployment from the above estimated 13.6 percent of the labor force to 5 percent (using the same methods of estimation)—reducing the actual number of unemployer from 13.0 million to 4.8 million; (2) to provide jobs for the normal increase in population, again assuming 5 percent unemployment; and (3) to provide jobs needed to replace those lost owing to increasing labor productivity (assuming that output per man-hour will continue to grow at the

* It is interesting to note that this estimate of real unemployment is an increase of 52.8 percent over the official rate, and that back in 1971 in this space we estimated real as compared to official unemployment at the end of 1970 by an entirely different method and came out with the conclusion that the real rate was 51.6 percent higher than the official. See "Economic Stagnation and Stagnation of Economics," MONTHLY REVIEW, April 1971, especially pp. 3-6.

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same not very high rate of the last ten years). Here are the estimates (see Technical Note):

Table 4

	Number of Net New Jobs Needed 1975-1985 (in millions)
(1) To reduce the current unemployment rate to 5 percent	8.2
(2) To accommodate population increase, assuming same 5 percent unemployment rate	15.0
(3) To compensate for productivity gains	12.8
Total	36.0

Our estimates thus indicate that for unemployment in 1985 to drop to somewhere near the average of the past 25 years (the official average during those years was 4.8 percent), no fewer than 36 million jobs would have to be created.

Compare this with how many jobs *actually were* created in the last ten years—years which already are being looked back upon as a period of extraordinary prosperity. According to the latest *Manpower Report of the President,* the number is 16.6 million. This is about 46 percent of what would be needed for U.S. capitalism to function in the next decade approximately as well as it has in the post-Second World War period.

Further comment seems superfluous.

(May 18, 1975)

TECHNICAL NOTE

Method of estimating the number of additional jobs needed over the next ten years, as given in the above tabulation:

Line (1). Adding the underestimate of 3.1 million (line 2 of Table 3) to the officially reported 92.3, we arrive at an adjusted estimate of 95.4 million in the labor force, or 63.3 percent of the current population 16 years of age and over. Thus, 8.2 million new jobs would be needed to bring unemployment down to 4.8 million, or 5 percent of the adjusted labor force.

Line (2). According to the *Manpower Report of the President, op. cit.,* p. 309, there will be 175.7 million persons 16 years of age and over in 1985, or an increase of 24.9 million over the current level. If the percent of the population in the labor force will be the same as estimated

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in (1) above, this will mean a 15.8 million increase in the labor force by 1985. Assuming that 5 percent of these will be unemployed, 15 million new jobs will thus be needed to accommodate the population increase.

Line (3). Output per man-hour in the private economy increased by 22.6 percent between 1964 and 1974 (calculated from data in the *Manpower Report of the President, op. cit.,* p. 336). We assumed that man-hours per week will not change in the next ten years, and that the average rate of productivity increase will be the same as in the past decade. Applying this to only those currently employed in the private economy (69.3 out of the total 84.1 million employed in April 1975, the remainder having government jobs), we find that the number of jobs in the private economy would decline to 56.5 million if production remained constant. Thus, production would have to increase sufficiently to supply 12.8 million jobs to compensate for those lost due to the expected decline in the demand for labor resulting from steadily rising productivity.

There must be something rotten in the very core of a social system which increases its wealth without diminishing its misery, and increases in crime even more rapidly than in numbers.

—Karl Marx, *New York Daily Tribune,* September 16, 1859

What a convenient arrangement it is that makes a factory girl to sweat twelve hours a day in a factory, so that the factory proprietor, with a part of her unpaid labor, can take into personal service her sister as maid, her brother as groom, and her cousin as policeman or soldier.

—Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value,* vol. 1

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A LOOK BEYOND 1975

BY V. LEWIS BASSIE

The following is reprinted by permission from the *Illinois Business Review,* March 1975. V. Lewis Bassie, the editor of the *Review,* was an economist for the New Deal during the Great Depression of the 1930s. His estimate of what lies ahead for the U.S. economy is the most persuasive we have seen in the business press.—THE EDITORS

Current recession problems are regarded as temporary by both sides of the inflation-deflation debate. It is hoped that once the economy again turns up it will progress into self-sustaining growth. This is possible, but of rather limited probability. True, the budgetary stimulus will lift the fourth quarter to a high for the year, but real output is not likely to get back to the level of 1974. One-shot measures, such as the rebate on 1974 taxes, are variants of pump priming. The experience of the 1930s showed that pump priming does not produce a regular flow. Hence, the measures so far agreed upon do not ensure against a relapse in 1976.

Unemployment will not go away and may continue to grow for two more years. George Meany of the AFL-CIO predicted a 10 percent rate this year, and the administration has conceded the prospect of at least 9 percent. These estimates seem to be in a reasonable range. The margin of capacity available for meeting any increase in demand, probably close to $200 billion, will remain large for a long time. Still, the administration fears inflation and refuses to take the recession seriously.

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The Improvement Expected Later This Year

The downward phase of the cycle has progressed with extraordinary speed. With a lift from fiscal policy, some moderate recovery in the months ahead is probable, and such improvement is sure to be favorably interpreted. Even now the stock market is said to be "looking across the valley." It is an oversimplified view.

Declines in auto sales and home-building have been major factors in the recession so far. In part these sharp setbacks were reactions from the excesses of 1971-1973. The auto decline may have run its course for the time being. Inventories of unsold cars are now being sharply reduced. Fear of gasoline shortages is also subsiding.

Housing starts may also be near the low for the year. Funds are again flowing into the lending institutions. On the other hand, unemployment is worsening and this, too, is an important influence on housing. High interest rates are still restrictive, and the ability of consumers to carry debt will continue low for a while. The collapse in the real-estate boom was drastic, but even a moderate increase in housing starts during the spring and summer would halt the decline in construction.

Consumer disposable income will be increased by a tax cut of at least $16 billion. Unemployment compensation is running at a rate of $18 billion. And the one-year gain in social security benefits will be of the same order of magnitude. The effects of this potentially large stimulus are hard to assess. The tax cut of 1964 made a good success, but conditions are very different today, and multiplier effects will likely be much smaller. The consumer position results partly from the excessive use of credit. Inflation, borrowing, and hoarding have led to dishoarding, debt repayment, and the beginning of deflation. Adverse consumer attitudes reflect a severe loss of confidence in business and government. Real consumer expenditures in 1975 are forecast moderately below 1974, though spending in current dollars will push to new highs.

Investment Trend Downward into 1976

The fact that a modest gain is now in sight does not mean that the business cycle has been tamed. Its main powers—the

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accelerator and the position of stocks—are both working strongly in reverse. The former will ease temporarily, but the latter cannot be corrected in just a few months.

The inventory situation is unfavorable, reflecting the shift from speculative buying to protective selling. There is much talk about liquidation; it is being realized in autos, but not yet generally. Liquidating to the 1974 levels will not be enough, since the base for the end of 1975 will be lower. The current position is reminiscent of 1930. Then, in succeeding waves, it took six years to complete the adjustment. Current inventory control procedures are capable of speeding up the process, but continuing inflation and divergent views will confuse the issue. The inventory cycle will not be working for a renewal of steady growth any time soon. If the letdown in commodity prices leads to a more general reversal of expectations, the deflationary impact will be magnified.

The overinvestment that was the most basic feature of the boom will be an even more certain depressant on fixed investment outlays. As a result of the usual lags, the position will be worse at the begining of 1976. About a third of manufacturing capacity is now idle, and there is little chance that output this year can get anywhere near back to the earlier peak. Industrial and commercial building awards are sliding from a level that is already more than 10 percent below a year ago in real terms. Very few projects still coming under consideration will be able to meet industry's pay-back standards. Investment will also be depressed by the current business policies of maintaining profits; the latest report of the purchasing managers commented on the willingness to lose orders rather than cut prices. The decline in business investment will largely offset the forces for recovery in 1975 and may take control in 1976.

Obviously a renewal of the decline in 1976 cannot be predicted with any assurance at this time. All that is suggested is that it has a high enough probability so that anything now being done should be consistent with the needs of a longer time period. No doubt immediately stimulating measures are necessary. What is inappropriate is the ruling of programs that are slow acting, such as public works.

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WORK AND UNEMPLOYMENT

BY HARRY BRAVERMAN

The notion that all work, by its very nature, is and has been from time immemorial degraded and degrading is an article of faith with many of the modern sociologists-of-work. It is generally presented and defended on the basis of a few scraps of badly digested Greek, Latin, and Hebrew philology put together by an Italian scholar by the name of Adrian Tilgher, whose book is often used, with or without credit, to make up the first few pages of standard texts on the subject. In these texts, the hatred of work in its modern form is projected backward into all societies and all civilizations, not in order to better analyze the subject, but in order to dissolve it in generalities, badly misunderstood ancient attitudes, and highly selective citations. The many expressions of the pleasurability and naturalness of work as a life activity find no place in these pages, which rather prefer to single out certain Biblical laments.

There is one firm generalization with which we may begin, and this is that humanity is a *working* species. Its relationship

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This is the text of a talk delivered at a number of universities during March and April. Harry Braverman is director of Monthly Review Press and the author of *Labor and Monopoly Capital,* which was published by the Press earlier this year.

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with nature is not merely one of food gathering or seeking shelter in the crevices provided ready-made by nature. Rather, humanity takes the materials provided by nature and alters them into objects more useful to itself. Humanity works in order to live, to provide itself with the means and provisions of life. Thus, even though men and women often have occasion to complain of work as a *constraint* laid upon their species, there is never any doubt that work, as a species characteristic, is as natural to human life as grazing or hunting are to other species.

But it would be the greatest of all possible mistakes to take any simple truisms of this sort, whether in the form of Biblical laments or biological and evolutionary constraints, as the *direct* basis of an analysis of work in modern society. Between biology and sociology, civilization, with all of its social relations and institutions, intervenes. In capitalist society, work is organized in institutions which have long since separated us from simple production for our own use, and indeed have as a basis for their activities something very different from *any* kind of production for use. The purpose of a capitalist enterprise is, as we know, the surplus which may be extracted from the process of production. Thus while humans work to provide for their needs, in capitalist society nobody works who does not at the same time provide for the needs of capital. It is only by creating a surplus for the corporation that we obtain permission to create necessities for ourselves. In capitalist society, this is Rule One—or Catch-22—but whatever we call it, it is the underlying law of the system.

It is true that there have been other social forms through which ruling groups extracted from the working population a surplus for themselves. In slave societies, the masters directly appropriated the labor of others; in feudal society, the rulers took from the produce of others what they required, under rules which obligated the peasantry to surrender to the manorial lord a portion of their product or of their labor. Thus it has been said of feudalism that the nobility defended all, the clergy prayed for all, and the commons provided food for all.

But in capitalist society the manner in which a surplus is extracted is very special, and has had during the past two hundred years the most extraordinary consequences. The fore-

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most of these consequences is that the capitalists have taken into their own hands the direct control over all the processes of labor and production. In previous societies, the work of artisans, or of that immense mass of population then engaged in crop or animal husbandry as farmers, peasants, and serfs, was as a rule conducted autonomously. So far as the direct processes of labor were concerned, the artisans or peasants worked according to traditional methods, generally under their own control. It is only under capitalist conditions that the master takes over the entire process, repeatedly reshapes and reorganizes it to suit his own needs, and parcels it out as tasks to workers for whom the process as a whole is now lost.

Labor which has been subjected to these conditions is sometimes referred to as *alienated labor*. The vagueness of this phrase has increased with its popularity, and indeed we may suspect that its present vogue in official sociology and popular journalism is dependent upon its vagueness. In their usage, its connection with the specific conditions of capitalist social relations and capitalist production has all but disappeared, and alienated labor is understood to mean merely the worker who suffers from a feeling of distress, a malaise, a bellyache about his or her work. But the term may still be useful if its significant content is restored and clearly understood. It must be understood first of all in accordance with the prime definition of the verb to *alienate*, that is, to transfer ownership to another. The ownership of the tools and instruments of production is in capitalist society alienated, that is, transferred to others. The ownership of the product is alienated in the same sense; the ownership of the proceeds from the sale of the product likewise. And finally, the process of production too is alienated; it too is transferred to alien control and becomes the property of others. In the end, everything about the productive process has become alien to the worker, in the sense that everything is outside his or her interest, claim, and control. The wage becomes the sole equity of the worker in the job. Thus in capitalist society production is carried on in an atmosphere of hostility or indifference, by a mass of workers who have lost all stake in or concern for the process. This in turn makes necessary certain extraordinary means of control and management, as well as

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ever more alienating reorganizations of the work of production, so that we have here an alienation which feeds on itself, and becomes ever deeper, until it emerges as a profound antagonism. In this situation it is not at all surprising that work is seen as a curse; what is surprising is that it is tolerated at all.

The manner in which this step-by-step alienation of the process of production from the worker has developed historically is too large a subject to be dealt with here. Suffice it to say that it existed only in exceptional instances in ancient and medieval society, that it grew rapidly in the workshops of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries during the rise of early capitalism, that it became generalized in the factories of the nineteenth century, and that it has become virtually universal in the factories, mills, warehouses, offices, farms, wholesale and retail establishments, hospitals, offices of public administration, and even to some extent the schools of the twentieth century in the countries of fully developed capitalism.

Once the capitalist takes control of the process of production, he seeks every means whereby the output of the worker may be enlarged so that an ever-larger surplus may remain with him. At first this was accomplished by prolonging the working day, but in more recent times, intensive methods have replaced the extensive. This means the reduction of the labor time required in the production process, and it means also the cheapening of labor power. How is labor power cheapened? There are a variety of ways, but by far the most important in modern production is the breakdown of complex processes into simple tasks which are performed by workers whose knowledge is virtually nil, whose so-called training is brief, and who may thereby be used as interchangeable parts. In this way the requirements of production are satisfied not through small pools of highly skilled labor in each craft, but by labor of the simplest sort. The consequence is that for most jobs, the whole of society becomes a labor pool upon which to draw, and this helps to keep the value of labor power at the level of subsistence for the individual or below the level of subsistence for the family.

In speaking in this way about the capitalist or the corporate organization of capitalists, it is not my intention to assault

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them personally as a conscienceless breed of malign intent. Taken as a class they are no doubt, like all of us, only what society makes of them. But this is precisely the point; we must deal not with the capitalist as a person, but with the way the capitalist mode of production operates, with the conduct it enforces upon the capitalists themselves. After Henry Ford introduced the moving conveyor in 1912-1914 as a means of subassembly and final assembly of automobiles, none of the hundreds of automobile manufacturing firms then in existence could hope to continue long in business without adopting this process. From the moment the first food-retailing organization adopted self-service methods of shelving and checking-out commodities in its stores, no food-retailing organization could hope to prosper or perhaps even to survive without these methods. Or to take as another instance a process which is just getting under way: every office manager now understands that since the means have become available to segregate secretarial work in specialized production units connected to executive offices by modern telephonic and recording equipment, no office employing a large number of scattered secretaries can long afford to neglect this innovation, and many are beginning to reorganize secretarial work as the office equivalent of factory production work.

Thus the tendency of the capitalist mode of production, from its earliest days to the present when this tendency is becoming a headlong rush, is the incessant breakdown of labor processes into simplified operations taught to workers as "tasks." This leads to the conversion of the greatest possible mass of labor into work in its most elementary forms, labor from which all conceptual elements have been removed, and along with them most of the skill, knowledge, and understanding of production processes. Thus the more complex the process becomes, the less the worker understands; the more science is incorporated into technology, the less science the worker possesses; and the more machinery that is developed as an aid to labor, the more labor becomes a servant of machinery.

Although there is a general impression, sedulously fostered by official academic and journalistic opinion, that all this is happening because of the rise of scientific technology and the

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development of machinery, this process of the degradation of work is not dependent upon technology at all. It will be remembered that this mode of the organization of labor arose in the workshops of early capitalism at a time when modern technology did not exist. One need only read Adam Smith's description of the division of labor in pin manufacture to see that the key to the matter is *the organization of labor.* In modern industry, the worst examples of the division of labor are still found chiefly in those processes which exist in the interstices left open by technology: those things which cannot be mechanized, or cannot economically be mechanized by the capitalist at the prevailing rate of pay. Let us remind ourselves that one of the most abominable forms of labor—the one, in fact, that is so often mistakenly used as an instance of the horrors of modern machinery—the assembly line, is just such a case. It has little or nothing to do with machinery, since it is a hand process of the crudest sort; its technological feature is merely a primitive device for hauling the work past the worker. Even this device is dispensable, and is dispensed with in the case of smaller and lighter units of production which can be pushed along the worktable to the next station, although as a rule the powered endless belt or chain conveyor is favored by managements, not just as an aid to labor but chiefly because it enables managements to control the pace of production.

Modern technology, in fact, has a powerful tendency to break down ancient divisions of labor by reunifying production processes. Adam Smith's pins, for example, are no longer made by one worker who straightens the wire, another who cuts the lengths, a third who fashions the heads, a fourth who affixes them to the pins, a fifth who points the pins, a sixth who tins or whitens, another who inserts them into the paper, and so on. The entire process is reunified in a single machine which transforms great coils of wire into millions of pins each day, already papered and ready for sale. Now go back and read Adam Smith's arguments for the division of labor, arguments having to do with the dexterities gained in the constant application to one operation of a hand process, and so forth. You will notice that modern technology has made a complete hash of these arguments; not one remains with any force today.

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The reunified process in which the execution of all the steps is built in to the working mechanism of a single machine would seem now to render it suitable for a collective of associated producers, none of whom need spend all their time at any single function, and all of whom can participate in the engineering, design, improvement, repair, and operation of these ever more productive machines. Such a system need show no significant loss of production. And it would represent the reunification of the craft in a body of workers far superior to the old craftsmen, workers who would become masters of the technology of their process on an engineering level, and who would apportion among themselves, in an equitable way, the various tasks connected with this form of production that has become so effortless and automatic.

But the division of labor in capitalist society has to do with many other things besides the pace of production, which in most cases would not be injured by eliminating it. It has to do, as Charles Babbage pointed out after Smith, with differential pay rates, which dictate that the ignorance of the great mass of the workers and the concentration of all knowledge in a very few engineering specialists is a desirable and in fact essential condition, rather than, as it would seem from the human point of view, an abomination. Thus the capitalist mode of production enforces upon each new process devised by technology an ever deeper division of labor, no matter how many possibilities for the opposite are opened up by machinery. In this way, two worlds of work are created: a world in which a very few managers and engineers grasp the process as a whole as their special monopoly, and a world of scheduling clerks, inventory clerks, timekeepers, machine tenders, machine repairers, stock chasers, forklift operators, warehouse attendants, and so on, each of whom performs simple labor in service to a complex machine, and each of whom is expected to make a working life of forty to fifty years out of these scraps of duties, none of which can engage the interests or capacities of a mature human—or even a child—for more than a few weeks or months, after which they become sheer and empty drudgery.

Thus we may say that while production has become collective, and the individual worker has been incorporated into

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the collective body of workers, this is a body the brain of which has been lobotomized—or worse, removed entirely. Its very brain has been separated from its body, having been appropriated by modern management as a means of controlling and cheapening labor power and labor processes.

We have briefly considered the production process; let us turn now to its outcome. Let us say at once what cannot be denied and what is in fact capitalism's chief historic role: this unremitting drive on the part of the capitalists to extract an ever greater surplus from the working population, a drive in which the immense powers of science and technology have been enlisted in the service of the accumulation of capital, has brought about an extraordinary development of human powers of production. The productivity of labor and hence the surplus which it makes available for further expansion have risen most remarkably. The owners of the corporations never tire of reminding us that they require great surpluses if they are to enlarge the scale of production constantly. This is quite true, and no change of social system can do away with it as a technical fact: if production is to grow, a portion of the product must be reinvested in the process of production rather than consumed at once. This we may treat as a natural law; but it is no natural law that this surplus become and remain the property of a tiny ruling class. This is rather a law of capitalism, and as a result of its workings there is an immense accumulation of property at one pole of society, greater than at any time in human history.

But how about the mass of the working population? By the mass of the population I mean that portion excluding the managers and the proprietors of industry, and even excluding those somewhat privileged intermediate strata in professional occupations and in middle management who today make up a new middle class. This remaining mass, which constitutes perhaps three quarters of all employment in the United States, is described in the Census and Labor Department statistics under six headings: craftsmen, operatives and kindred workers, laborers, clerical workers, service workers, and sales workers. Here we find close to 60 million out of the 80 million persons

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(including owners) counted by the census of 1970, and here too we find those whose jobs are characteristically of the sort I have been describing.

I noted earlier that the reduction of the typical job to the level of a few simplified tasks is one of the chief means of cheapening labor power, and, I added, "this helps to keep the value of labor power at the level of subsistence for the individual or below the level of subsistence for the family." Lest this be thought an exaggeration, let me now substantiate it with estimates based upon the pay scales for workers in all of these six classifications in 1971 and official estimates of the lowest possible cost of maintaining a family of four above the subsistence line in the same year. (It is worth noting that the situation since then can only have worsened, not only because of the economic crisis and spread of unemployment, but also because inflation has outstripped wages in the intervening period, thus lowering real wages.)

Some 80 percent of service workers and workers in retail trade did not receive enough pay to support a family of four above the subsistence level. The same is true of at least 75 percent of all clerical workers and laborers, who are paid on about the same level, the clerical workers slightly below the laborers. It is also true of close to 70 percent of all operatives and kindred workers. Only craftsmen earn, in their majority, enough to lift a family of four above this officially defined minimal level of subsistence, and even in this grouping the wages of 40 percent, if used to support a family of four, were below the amount required for minimal subsistence.

One result of these earnings levels is that very large numbers of families live in severe poverty. That a big majority of families is not put in that position is due only to multiple job-holding within the same family. This we know. But what I am trying to highlight is the startling fact that a pretty large majority of the jobs in the economy have now been transformed, by the working of the capitalist division of labor, into the kinds of work one usually thinks of as "second jobs"—the mythical pin-money jobs which women and teenagers take to supplement the major family income. The result is that most of the people, whether they are supplementary earners or heads

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of households, now occupy such "second jobs" with their pitiful and demeaning duties and meager pay.

That this is so is due not only to the kinds of division of labor we have been discussing, but also to the occupational and industrial shifts which have resulted from the accumulation of capital in the United States. Let me try to make this clear.

In striving to economize on labor time, the corporation is also striving to reduce the number of workers required for a given quantity of output, or at any rate—and this comes to much the same thing—to produce a rapidly growing output without a proportional growth in the number of workers. To use Marx's memorable way of putting it, unlike the generals, who win wars by *recruiting* armies, the captains of industry win their wars by *discharging* armies. The practical consequences of this can be seen in any analysis of United States employment in the manufacturing industries over any reasonable period of time. Thus in the United States between 1947 and 1964, the output of the textile industries grew by more than 40 percent, but employment was cut by one third. Other industries such as iron and steel foundries, lumber and wood products, malt liquors, and footwear showed production increases of from 15 to 40 percent accompanied by employment drops of 10 to 25 percent. The petroleum industry poured five sixths more product at the end of the period than at the beginning, but its employment was one fourth lower. Even the construction industry, which by the nature of its production process is notably resistant to technological change, doubled its output while adding only 50 percent to its labor. Only the most rapidly growing industries showed substantial increases in employment. Thus, electrical machinery and motor freight added some 50 and 70 percent respectively to their employment, but in the process roughly tripled their output. The aluminum industry more than doubled its employment, but this was the result of a *quadrupled* output. An extreme case is that of air transport, which enlarged its output some eight times, while increasing employment by only one and one third times.

Over a long-term view, the trend can be seen clearly by focusing on the changes in manufacturing and related in-

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dustries. For at least a century, these industries occupied close to half—usually between 45 and 50 percent—of all non-farm employment. But after the 1920 census this began to change, and by the most recent census, that of 1970, these industries occupied only one third of non-farm employment.

There has therefore been an immense shift of labor out of the traditional manufacturing, mining, construction, and transportation industries into the very rapidly growing areas of real estate, insurance, finance, services, and wholesale and retail trade. But these rapidly growing fields of industry are precisely the low-range portions of the economy, while the higher-wage sector is the stagnant or declining portion. None of this is accidental: there are profound structural reasons why the most rapid growth of capital has moved into the low-wage areas, and also into the enlargement of nonproductive as against productive work. But apart from the reasons for this trend, its reality is not a matter for doubt. And it is this trend, along with the rapid growth of the lowest-wage occupations such as clerical, service, and retail sales, which in good measure account for the fact that we increasingly live in an economy of "second jobs" and that true "first jobs," in the traditional sense—rewarding in themselves and paying enough to support a family—are, on the working-class level, fewer than ever.

Now, if the captain of industry wins his wars, as Marx put it, by "discharging armies," how do we know that the rapidity of the accumulation of capital will keep up with this, and that new products, services, or unproductive industries will develop rapidly enough to absorb all the labor freed by the capitalist drive for higher productivity? Well, we do not know it. In fact, in capitalist society there is always a pool of unused labor power, an industrial reserve army. It has almost always been a very sizable mass in United States industrial history, at least during this century, and shrinks to a small size only on those rare occasions when the upswings in the business cycle are unusually strong and correspond as well to longer-term upswings in the process of capital accumulation, especially during wars. Apart from the natural growth of population, the freeing of workers from their jobs by the continuous revolution in production creates, in Marx's words, "a disposable industrial-

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reserve army that belongs to capital quite as absolutely as if the latter had bred it at its own cost."

If we try to verify this from United States statistics, we run up against the difficulty that unemployment figures are kept on very different principles from those encompassed by the concept of the industrial reserve army. But these statistics, nevertheless, have the value attaching to any set of figures kept on more or less consistent principles over a long period of time—that of showing a trend. The most striking thing to emerge from an examination of the unemployment statistics from the Second World War to the present is the secular trend of the gradual but persistent enlargement of the pool of officially counted unemployment. Since throughout this period there was also a continuous business cycle, so that the line is a jagged one, it is easiest to see the trend in the following comparison: the levels of unemployment which at the start of the period meant recession are now regarded as perfectly acceptable prosperity rates. The unemployment rate of 5 to 6 percent which characterized the recession years of 1949-1950 has now become the prosperity rate of the seventies, the rate which we would be delighted to have back again. That we will get it is open to question, since even the optimistic Mr. Ford and his economic advisers have promised us an unemployment rate above 7 percent, even in a recovery from the present crisis.

Now I stated a moment ago that these unemployment rates are not the same as the concept of an industrial reserve army, the latter being much larger. This is because the numbering of unemployment is a relatively restrictive count. Let me give you a graphic instance of this. The unemployment figures for February 1975 were only slightly changed from the number of people counted as unemployed in the previous month, January. Yet we were told at the same time that *employment* had fallen by a full half-million persons. How explain this paradox? In official parlance, almost 600,000 persons had "dropped out of the labor force" between one month and the next. And what does this remarkable statistic mean? Simply the following: since capitalism does not recognize that every able-bodied adult has either the responsibility or the opportunity to work and contribute to society, the theory is that one cannot distinguish the

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unemployed from the leisure class except by asking the individual whether he or she had been "actively seeking employment" during the previous four weeks. Those who cannot show that they have been doing so—and in the largest majority of cases this would mean those who have given up hope of getting a job—are no longer counted as part of the labor force and hence cannot be "unemployed." Nothing in the official statistics distinguishes them from the housewife who has never been counted as part of the labor force, or from the millionaire in Palm Springs.

Thus there is clearly a large mass of non-working people who constitute a reserve army of labor, only a portion of which is counted. Those who rise to the surface in active search of jobs are counted as the unemployed. Those who sink below, to the bottom, and are forced on to the welfare rolls, are accounted paupers and counted in that way. The size of this pauperized mass is now between fourteen and fifteen million persons, an enormous size reached back in 1970 which now bids fair to go much higher.

From all this we see that the accumulation of wealth which takes place at one pole of society is matched at the other pole by an accumulation of misery.

I have said all I can say on this occasion about the degradation of work in the twentieth century. In brief, this degradation consists, beyond the surrender of the tools of production and the products of production into alien hands, in the loss of control by the workers over the process of production and their transformation into instruments in the hands of capital—instruments of no special qualities, exchangeable and replaceable. Further, it consists in the narrowing of the base of productive labor upon which the economy rests, to the point where an ever smaller portion of society labors to maintain all of it, while the remainder is drafted, at lower rates of pay and even more demeaning conditions of labor, into the unproductive economy of capitalism. And finally, it consists in the misery of unemployment and of outright pauperization, which are aspects of the reserve army of labor created by capital more or less automatically in its accumulation process.

In return, the workers have their wage, and a wage, more-

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over, which is not so lofty as once supposed in illusionary times when myths blanked out facts. This is the bargain. It is for those who live under it to judge this bargain, and, whether actively or passively, they do judge it all the time. How they have reacted to this bargain, as individuals and in the mass, in the past, is a history which remains to be fully told and analyzed, so far as it concerns the United States; how they react to it today and in the future is perhaps the most important single subject for study, analysis, and forecast that this country now offers to the social scientist and the social critic.

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LUCIA: STYLE AND MEANING IN REVOLUTIONARY FILM

BY STEVEN KOVACS

Tricontinental Films has released the second Cuban feature film in the United States, *Lucía* by Humberto Solás. Begun in 1967, released in 1969, the film had already reaped its share of honors throughout the world, including the Gold Medal of the 1969 Moscow Film Festival, received critical acclaim, and passed on to the status of a classic by the time it first reached American audiences at the abortive Cuban Film Festival in March of 1972. *Lucía* has not suffered for being five years old. Little exposed to the revolutionary cinema emerging from the Third World, we find every one of its manifestations fresh and striking. Our delight is comparable to that which was captured by a Cuban documentary film crew in a short entitled *Por Primera Vez*. This ten-minute film captures the expressions of children and adults in the remote mountains of Cuba who had never seen a motion picture before, as they watch Chaplin's antics in *Modern Times*. Now the roles are reversed: we are the uninitiated, the Cubans the pioneers in a new form of expression.

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Lucía is the epic story of Cuba seen through the lives of three women. They are presented at the three most decisive moments of Cuban history: the struggle for independence from Spain in the 1890s, the overthrow of Machado in 1932, and the establishment of the revolutionary government of Fidel Castro in the 1960s. The choice of these periods is obvious from a revolutionary point of view. The first two episodes involve a battle against a rigid, oppressive, political order. The third is a narrative of personal liberation of a Cuban woman of the revolution once the revolution is achieved. Yet Solás clearly saw the last episode as a continuation of the revolutionary struggle of the two previous stories. How deeply that fight concerned him is indicated by his first movie *Manuela* (1966) in which he told the story of a woman fighting in the Oriente alongside Fidel's men. That was his initial vision—a modern *cubana* joining the guerrillas to fight for political freedom. From there he elaborated his story backwards in time to situate the *cubana* at crucial historical moments and projected ahead to delineate her role in a new society. The use of the same couple in the third episode as in *Manuela* further testifies to the unity of vision of Humberto Solás. *Manuela* was the germinal essay which flowered into the masterpiece of *Lucía*.

Yet the meaning of the three divisions is embedded in deeper layers of historical consciousness. They mirror not only three distinct epochs of Cuban history, but also the three major phases in the political struggle of Latin American nations: as colony, as native capitalist dictatorship, and as sovereign socialist state. By the very fact that its revolutionary message is verified by historical experience, *Lucía* transcends the particularities of the Cuban experience and becomes a general artistic statement for all Latin America, and by extension for all the Third World.

Lucía confounds our expectations of history on the screen. Unlike North American historical movies which provide simply a historic decor, it achieves a faithfulness to the historic moment. The current fad of nostalgia movies only highlights a tendency of Hollywood to stress the trappings of a bygone era rather than the verity of the period itself. Beneath the plume, the eyepatch, the helmet, the coiffure, or the bandana, the Hollywood

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actor has always remained the guy next door, an American with contemporary values playing at rather than enacting history. The limitation of American historical treatments is dramatized by the fact that Hollywood does not create histories: it creates "historical adventures" and "historical romances," with "historical" always remaining in the position of a qualifier. Nostalgia itself is a symptom of bourgeois consciousness. It is a longing for a past period rather than a confrontation with the present. As such it is an escape. But it is not even a true escape into a different reality, a plunge into the exotic which refreshes us with its total strangeness. It consists figuratively and literally only of the trappings of a past actuality. By emphasizing the quaintness of the past moment that it evokes, nostalgia deprives the moment of its full historical and human dimension. History is recreated in the self-serving interest of the bourgeoisie. Fontainebleau becomes a resort hotel, Louis XV the trademark of outlandish stuffed chairs and matching accessories. They only serve to entice an already insatiable appetite for material goods. By negating the vitality of the past, the bourgeois seeks to rob the present of its dynamic actuality.

But Hollywood's version of history is really too far removed from *Lucía*. A comparison with more authentic histories of Western European cinema is potentially more fruitful. Whether we cite Renoir's *La Marseillaise* or Visconti's *The Leopard* we are talking about original works which depict specific historic moments and movements with power and accuracy. Movies such as these cannot be faulted for pandering to bourgeois escapist consumerism. They stand as more or less subjective historical treatments which in their way faithfully reflect a segment of history. Suddenly the difference between them and *Lucía* emerges. While they exist as histories, *Lucía* transcends history to assert itself as an epic.

Lucía is an epic because it treats a nation's emergence from colonial domination through capitalist exploitation to socialist independence. In dealing with the noblest of national aspirations it automatically moves from the realm of history to the exalted form of the epic. Yet it manages to avoid being dogmatic and didactic by treating the stories of individuals

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whose lives become inextricably involved in the political struggle that rages around them. By focusing on the periods of change from one form of political reality to another, the movie is able to emphasize the people's struggle for liberation. By picking these key periods it further reveals this fight to be a historical process toward the realization of collective political consciousness. By making the episodes personal stories it reveals that the ultimate significance of political movements lies in the extent to which they influence the individual.

But these individuals are women. On the surface that means little. Women have always been the personifications of national identification, whether directly identified with the Earth, as in the Russian concept of Motherland, or standing for an ideal, as does the French Lady of Liberty. In the Latin context, the woman has always existed as a myth split into two opposite forces: the evil, lusty seductress and the shining, spiritual virgin. Motherhood was identified with the latter, not through any exercise of logic, but rather because Western morality decreed that it belonged among all that was good. It was the Christian myth of the Virgin Mary that offered the model for this leap of faith. Both Virgin and Mother, Mary was the unreachable ideal of all women. In the traditional Spanish context the Virgin-Mother was a protectress, the female ideal in whose name the land was ruled, conquests were made, crusades were begun. She was less the object of national identification than a moral and spiritual force to be invoked by the individual. Such models have always abounded in Hispanic lore. The women in *Lucía* are a far cry from the traditional Catholic image of the ideal Virgin-Mother. While the film is epic, the three women refuse to function as larger than life symbols. They are individual earthly beings whose existence is determined by the society in which they live. Since their society is one which heavily depends on the myth of the Virgin Mary, their very presence is an attack on the static cultural heritage of Hispanic nations. The three Lucías are independent, conscious women who confront the world with a self-assuredness and courage that knows no historical confinement.

Raquel Revuelta is aptly cast as the first Lucía, a spinster who stands at that delicate age where she is still capable of

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falling in love but is already on the road to settling in to a carefully circumscribed world of maidenhood. Her linear features and classic Spanish profile are set off not only by a parasol, hat, and well-coiffured hair, but also by means of quietly feminine acting which accentuates the expected restraint of a nineteenth-century spinster. She has accepted the life style that is assigned to a woman in her position. Her company consists only of her family and of other women of her class. She takes walks with them and attends their parties. She is of a quiet, deep temperament, adolescent in outlook, old maid by convention. While her friends bubble with excitement at afternoon tea parties, she remains sedate, smiling, accommodating. For the others, gossip from Paris is the event of the month, for her it is an amusing part of the well-defined class whose member she is. Solás avoided the temptation to depict these women as fading spinsters. They are very much alive, singing and dancing in their lace finery, under crystal chandeliers, around tables laden with china, to the accompaniment of a piano. They are no less people for being members of the upper class, no more devoid of feeling for revolving in an exclusive world of women. Their warmth and exuberance are simply channeled into pettier preoccupations.

It is at one of their gatherings that the older Rafaela relates the story of the nun Fernardina whose brutal rape by soldiers drove her insane. She tells it with morbid delight, her eyes wide, excited to be talking of rape in the sheltered circle of her friends. Nothing could be further from the well-ordered, carefree life of women of high society than the religious dedication of a nun and her experiences in battle. In her own misguided way Rafaela was trying to reach out from her narrow circle of bourgeois existence to the world of beliefs and passions, and the conflict that results from their practice. Lucía will also make this break with her quiet life, but through actual involvement, not flights of fantasy.

Fernardina's episode sets off and complements the thematic structure and visual quality of the film. It introduces her as she witnesses the murder of rebels by the Spanish troops. This is the first indication of the conflict that engulfs all of Cuba. Coming as it does in the middle of a gay party, it creates

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a dialectic between the peaceful world of the sheltered bourgeois and the violent battles in which the people are engaged. It is an episode as full of movement and of life as the party itself. Solás's exuberance cannot be bridled: he insists on highly energized scenes shot with a careful eye to visual composition and texture. The delicate surroundings of a lively party are replaced by the sordid scenery of dead bodies strung up on a hill, like so many of Goya's visions of the "horrors of war." The clarity of the salon alternates with the smoke-filled battlefield, the carefree laughter with the shrieks of the fleeing nun, the gently moving camera with a jostled, shaking image. Cuba of 1895 is established between these two disparate realities.

Lucía's life changes when she meets Rafael, a dandy who professes to love her. At once elegant and unassuming, he appeals to her tender serenity. As he persists, she discovers the joys of love, perhaps for the first time. In a lyrical sequence in her bedroom she swings around joyously laughing and singing, throws open the window, and flings herself on the bed. Her happiness is shattered by the rumor spreading around town that Rafael is a married man. They meet at the ruins of a desolate monastery where he tries to insist on his love for her. The genteel mood of courtship is past. He looks darker, more menacing, desperate, as he chases her amidst somber stone walls. He throws himself upon her, attempting to possess her at once. His energy spent, he retreats into a corner, like a beaten animal, sobbing in the dark. Lucía herself has changed: her disheveled clothes and her hair in disarray indicate that she has come closer than ever before to her own sexuality. Exuberantly joyous at his initial tender chivalry, profoundly hurt by his alleged infidelity, exposed to his animal sexuality, and finally witnessing his deep hurt, Lucía has come to know her suitor fully. With genuine passion aroused, mingling with human compassion for this man who has revealed so much of himself, she responds to him deliberately, lovingly. She approaches resolutely, tears his shirt and embraces him. In becoming a woman she has proven herself stronger than her suitor.

Gradually the political conflict surrounding them is elaborated. As a guest at her house, Rafael declares his lack of

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interest in taking sides in the war of independence. She, on the other hand, is a tacit supporter of the revolution through her love for her brother Felipe, who is organizing guerrillas at their plantation. Yet these are intimations of political conflict which do not in themselves seem to have any greater meaning. Only when he entreats her to take him away to their estate does the full political drama unfold. As the two of them approach the mansion on horseback, the Spanish cavalry suddenly emerges to wage an attack on the guerrilla hideout. Betrayed, she watches her suitor ride away to join the troops. The ensuing battle claims her brother as a victim. Driven mad with shame and sorrow, she finds Rafael in the city, now dressed in a Spanish uniform, and stabs him to death.

The political nature of this episode manifests itself in different ways. At the most obvious it shows the various faces of Cuba during its war of liberation. It is a struggle in which no one remains unaffected and unafflicted. Rafael's assertion that he is apolitical is in fact a confession of his loyalty to Spain. Lucía's very personal affair is revealed as a political maneuver on the part of Rafael to find the guerrilla headquarters. Her political involvement remains always intensely personal. She identifies with Cuba through her family and friends, especially through her love for her brother, the guerrilla leader. When she is betrayed, she suffers the defeat of her brother's forces through his death. Her only means of action remains personal as she executes her suitor.

The episode also develops a relationship between Lucía and Fernardina the nun which has political overtones. Their fates are curiously intertwined despite the differences between their social circumstances and personal lives. Fernardina appears at the very beginning as the subject of the story told to Lucía and her friends. Her rape foreshadows the violence to which Lucía is subjected at the end. Both are outsiders with deep beliefs who are swept into the bloody arena of war-torn Cuba. The point of the film is not so much to show that these two women become embroiled in military conflict because they are especially sensitive, as it is to demonstrate that no one can remain an innocent bystander in the totality of a war of independence. They are representative individuals of their social

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milieux, personifications of two different modes of existence in colonial Cuba.

Yet the masterful presentation of the relationship of the two women is a function not merely of their social authenticity but also of their place within the narrative of the movie and their individual characterization. Having linked the two in the imagination of Lucía at the very beginning, Solás establishes Fernardina in the present as the crazed woman beset by the derelicts of the streets. The paths of the two women cross halfway through the episode, at the crucial point when Lucía decides to ride off with Rafael. She steps out on the street and immediately Fernardina throws herself on her, pleading with her not to go. We have seen Lucía on the streets before, smiling as she alighted from a carriage, surrounded by friends, holding a parasol to shade her from the sun. The equanimity of her soul was matched by the tranquil environment captured by the stationary camera. Her well-ordered world has been jarred by the turbulence of her passions, a turmoil which will open up to a massive conflagration. Her face revealing apprehension, she rushes to join her lover by way of a deserted street leading to the outskirts of town. The warmth of her sheltered existence is behind her; she is now exposed to a harsher reality. The stable camera recording at a safe distance is replaced by one that is riveted on the faces of the women, following the jerky movements that issue from their confrontation.

Lucía and Fernardina meet the second time at the end, after Lucía has executed her lover. (That it is an execution, not a murder, is clear. He withdraws from the group he was chatting with, backs up to an iron fence, and clasps the bars as Lucía plunges her knife into him with relentless fury. A low-angle shot of his corpulent body against the railing suggests crucifixion rather than vengeful murder.) As she is taken away by force she breaks down into plaintive sobs. The atrocities she has witnessed, the loss of her lover and brother, and above all the realization that she had been used to betray the guerrillas led her to commit the most desperate act of self-purification. In only a short space of time her life had been totally uprooted, first by the delicious pangs of love, then by the treachery of her lover. She has been moved by extraordinary events out-

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side her settled life. She has gone temporarily insane, yet she is driven by a madness that has a higher rationale. Having performed her duty as executioner, she collapses from the strain of all that has passed. It is at this point that she is joined by her spiritual counterpart, Fernardina, who follows Lucía as she is led away, speaking to her with the expressive pain on her face. A glimmer of recognition registers in Lucía's eyes—she recognizes Fernardina, their common misery, their sisterhood. In the process of her degradation from bourgeois maiden to social pariah, she has confronted and finally understood the enigma of the outcast nun. That understanding issues from their common experiences. Both were honest souls whose goodness made sense within the narrow confines of their social existence. Once they were torn from the stability they had known and were flung into the violent scene of political conflict, their personally willed goodness was enhanced by experience at the hands of uncontrollable, irrational forces. Their optimism was fundamentally and eternally shaken. They became unearthly, mythical figures who related to the world through a newly found wisdom and compassion. The proper uniform of the nun and the fine clothes of the upper-class spinster gave way to the rags of the beggar and the criminal.

The recognition and spiritual union of the two women exercises enormous impact on the audience because of the attention Solás pays to the social and dramatic exigencies of the film. While Lucía is a daughter of the upper class with appropriately fine Castilian features, Fernardina is a *mestiza* with the dark skin and hooked nose of her Indian ancestors. Thus, their union is not merely the mutual acceptance of two women who have undergone similar trials, but of two women of different social and racial backgrounds. Their recognition of each other is therefore more than an occasion of charged human contact: it is a social act of sisterhood. Solás elaborates the social differences between them not only to infuse political meaning into his work, but also to create dramatic tension. The inherent contrast that exists between the two women because of their separate social classes (which, of course, leads them to different life styles: the convent for the lower-class *mestiza*, social parties and eventual happy domesticity for her upper-class

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counterpart) is further accentuated by assigning to them different fates. Fernardina is not exactly a foil, but certainly an elusive complement to Lucía. If she appears in the opening scenes as a premonition of what will happen to Lucía and she herself becomes the augur at their first meeting, their destinies join at the conclusion of the episode. She is a silent, suffering victim raped by Spanish troops, accosted by street urchins. She is the *leitmotif* of oppression throughout the episode. In her profound passivity she comes to symbolize more than her class or her race—she becomes the oppressed Cuban nation. Lucía, on the other hand, is a conscious woman who actively seeks to control her destiny. She becomes a lover on her own terms; she leads her suitor to her plantation; and she avenges his treachery by killing him. Although circumscribed by her society, Lucía exercises the proud self-assurance that characterizes the strongest individuals at all periods and at all places. She is the indomitable spirit of the Cuban nation which is reaffirmed in her namesakes of the 1930s and 1960s. The coming together of these two women marks not only an instance of human recognition and solidarity, but a confluence of mythical forces as well.

While the mythical dimension is present in the relationship of the two leading women, it is not restricted to them. It draws attention to itself at the moment of holocaust, the encounter between Spanish regulars and local guerrillas. While this is the most populous scene, it is no less intimate than the women's mutual unfolding. The two armies clash with unbound fury. Because they are of the same family they feel their anger in their throat. It is a conflict of the deepest sort: not only the fight of brother against brother as in civil wars, but the struggle of son against father that takes place in all wars of national liberation. The European claims the land and people for his own—in fact, his blood flows in the veins of the rebels—he really is the father of the land. With paternal stubbornness he holds on to the land, to his children, to his dreams of self-expansion. His fight is bitter and his justice punitive. The rebels are the Indians, the Africans, the *mestizos*, siding with their raped, abused mother and motherland but fighting with the unyielding brutality of their Spanish fathers and masters. They know that the tight clutch of the colonizer can only

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be loosened by chopping off his hand. They know too that defeat means death or, worse than death, ignominious slavery. The personal hatreds of the family are multiplied by the population of the colony so that a national war rages with a greater intensity than the most bitter family feuds. Because the conflict is so personal and so vicious Solás chooses to illustrate its most heinous and therefore most characteristic moment—a surprise attack on a secret headquarters. Only after the initial forays of the Spanish troops do the guerrillas amass their strength to emerge on horseback from the jungle. The battle that follows will live as one of the most striking ever to appear on the screen. Naked black men ride out on horses to meet the Spanish cavalry: they are man and horse combined, human flesh joined to animal, modern centaurs bringing horror to the uniformed Spanish unit. It is a confrontation between the forces of light and darkness, civilization and animality, reason and feeling. If we are struck by the image of a naked black cavalry, we need not dwell on the fertility of the director's imagination in dreaming up such a powerful symbol of Third World resistance. These galloping incarnations of the devil were actual soldiers who participated in throwing off the Spanish yoke. They rode into battle naked, proud of their bodies, sure of their purpose, and knowing full well the devastating impact their visual appearance would have on the foe. That image seems so modern to us, yet its modernity is merely an affirmation of its mythic, timeless verity.

It is especially in the battles that Solás's technical mastery begins to prevail upon us. At first, we are aware only of the massive, choreographed battle scenes in the manner of Hollywood and Soviet spectaculars. Soon the men are on the ground and we recognize the hand-to-hand combat implanted in our memories by countless fistfights in Western saloons. Then suddenly a new sensation overtakes us as we experience the physical agitation of the hand-held camera running after the soldiers. The unwritten but strictly observed rule requiring a relatively stable image on the screen is flung to the past as our eyes ricochet off one body, then another, our balance upset, our senses jerked to attention. Yes, the hand-held camera has been used before by New Wave directors, but they sought

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to create a casual, personal—at the most extreme—disjointed style. Solás, on the other hand, infuses the image with a kinetic tension unknown to his Parisian predecessors, almost as if the storm of the battle engulfed the camera in one of its powerful waves. Even in its agitated state the camera responds to his command to focus in close-up, if only momentarily, upon distorted faces, distended limbs. He used the hand-held camera and extreme close-up before, when he wanted to depict the rape of Fernardina and her harassment on the streets, and he uses them again in the final scene of Lucía's revenge and emotional collapse. These two techniques keep recurring in the film because they faithfully express individual anguish and mass violence, two succeeding stages in the struggle against oppression.

Lucía's revolutionary breakthrough is contained in its first episode. It is here that a Marxist-mythical view of history forms the context for the dramatic events in the life of a *cubana,* which are presented with the aid of techniques consistent with the story being told. The demands of the revolutionary message are here met by appropriately novel means of expression to create a sophisticated fusion of revolutionary form and content. However, the tension of the first episode is too great to be sustained throughout the entire movie. The shimmering brilliance of the 1895 story demands a more composed sequel. As a result, Solás shifts gears and moods when he approaches the second episode.

In this story, set in the 1930s, he develops an intimate style which makes it his favorite of the three. Here he is less of an innovator; his pacing, his camera style are comparable to the atmospheric recreations of Bertolucci, but he is no less brilliant. He introduces the second Lucía, Eslinda Núñez, a serenely beautiful bourgeoise with the eyes of a doe. She and her mother are going to their summer house on one of the cays. The weather is still stormy. As we later find out, they have been sent there so early in the season by her father, to allow him more time with his mistress in Havana. The fragility of the two women in their fashionable clothes is accentuated by a long shot of them getting off a rickety ferry boat with tall palm trees bending in the fierce wind. On the island she meets Aldo, a boyish-looking revolutionary with whom she falls in love. The contrast between her parents' life style and Aldo's is

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succinctly established by views of the spacious summer house and of his one-room flat. Her mother's bourgeois degeneracy is capsulized by her posing in front of an ornate mirror as she tries to recapture her lost youth. Lucía's arduous new life is characterized by a long shot of her sitting up in bed at the far end of Aldo's bare room. Her love for him leads her to espouse his style of life and revolutionary activities. She goes to work as a seamstress. While he and his friends ambush frolicking policemen watching rehearsals of a girlie show in an old theater, Lucía begins to organize the women in the factory. From scrawling slogans on the bathroom mirror to participating in demonstrations, she wages the fight against Machado's dictatorship. Once Machado falls, however, Aldo and his friends accept the new regime all too quickly and all too uncritically. They attend debauched parties of the basically unchanged ruling elite. The guests at the parties are a mixture of the early Soviet typology of decadent characters and Fellini's grotesquerie of virago sensuality. Gradually Aldo and his friends recognize that their struggle has been for naught. They take up arms again for an ambush, but this time Aldo is killed. Having abandoned the active pursuit of his political beliefs for only a brief moment, Aldo has revealed a fault which is redressed in dramatic terms. Lucía is called upon to identify his body in a morgue. Lacking the epic sweep of the first episode and operating as an intimate portrait of bourgeois individualism, the second story must end in open desolation since it is still dealing with an era of oppression.

In this novella Solás demonstrates the same sensitivity to bourgeois life styles in his treatment of the characters that we have witnessed in that other remarkable Cuban movie *Memories of Underdevelopment*. Nonpoliticized Western European and American audiences are first drawn to such highly sophisticated portrayals of the upper-middle classes. Surprised by the openness of Cuban film production and unable to accept the revolutionary message of the movies, they marvel instead at their own reflection in the mirror of the screen. What they see is much better than what they actually are. They become enamored with such idealizations of themselves, forgetting for the moment who has created that image and failing to under-

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stand the meaning of that image within the context of the movie. Yet the important thing is that they come to appreciate such a Cuban film. They are right for the wrong reasons.

In the final episode Solás emerges from the haunted past and steps into the sunshine of the present. The progression from epic to personal style culminates in a lively contemporary comedy. With the constraints of the past destroyed, the Revolution embarks on an energetic exploration of its possibilities. Men and women are freely working shoulder to shoulder in creating a new society for themselves. With political oppression gone, basic material needs satisfied, education and health care provided for all, nothing seems to stand in the way of the new socialist state. Nothing—except vestiges of centuries-old oppression which cannot be erased by governmental decree. The ideology of the old order concerning political and economic organization can be easily replaced, but not the ideology ruling personal relationships. The hierarchic social structure is deeply embedded in the people. It is most difficult to supplant when it concerns the most personal of relationships, that between a man and a woman. The eradication of male dominance is difficult enough to effect, but especially in traditional Latin societies. The struggle against *machismo* is the theme of the third episode. It features a beautiful *mestiza*, Adela Legra, who has just married Tomás, a highly jealous but loving husband. He forbids her to work and even curtails her movements. He throws out the male teacher from Havana who is sent as part of the literacy program. When he is forced to let his wife be taught how to read and write, he keeps an eye on every lesson. When his jealousy becomes unbearable, she runs away from him and goes back to work with the women in the fields. He comes to claim her, but she will not go. A mad chase begins as he runs after her and the women run after him, trying to stop him. Tomás finally catches her on the beach where, amidst tears, he confesses his love for her, demanding that she come back as his subordinate. Despite the pains it causes her to refuse, she says she cannot go back to the way things were. A final shot of them fighting and playing in the surf promises their reconciliation as equals.

While the final episode presents the struggle against the

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last vestiges of capitalist exploitation, it does so in an exuberant, optimistic manner. Open camaraderie in work and a great deal of singing and dancing reflect the new mood of Cuba. As in the other episodes, so here too, the director's acute perception reveals itself in the smallest details. In one scene we catch a glimpse of Russians dancing at a party. They are gawky and awkward among the naturally rhythmic Cubans who point and smile at their clumsiness. Such a revealing little segment from the everyday actuality of life in revolutionary Cuba once again testifies to the director's deft hand and thoroughness.

What supports the festive atmosphere of the episode is the accompanying strains of "Guantanamera," with light-hearted commentary on the unfolding adventures of Lucía and Tomás. The mood is set by the guitar, which becomes the musical theme of the episode. In a similar manner the composer Leo Brower created a unified atmosphere for the other episodes: a piano playing Schumann for the 1895 story and a flute playing variations on a Chopin prelude for the 1932 sequence. In seeking to give each era a musical dimension Brower further accentuated the different approaches Solás utilized in treating the three episodes. The classical scores of Schumann and Chopin are strikingly opposed by the vocalist accompanying the guitar in singing a popular Cuban song with words especially composed for the action. The historical and cinematic movement are thus supported by the music in creating a powerful climax in the final episode.

Whatever else are the merits of *Lucía* it has been and most often will be praised for presenting women as independent people, fully cognizant of their needs and desires and willing to act on them. It is not an unduly favorable representation, one which would try to correct our traditional distorted image of dependent women (either servile mother-wife or sexy mistress) by overcompensating though presenting them as larger-than-life figures in whom all virtues unite. They are credible human beings, women who need men as much as men need women, who are no readier to abdicate their personal and social responsibilities than are their male counterparts. The authenticity of the portrayal lies in the presentation of the heroines of

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1895 and 1932 as distinct from many of their female companions who are frivolous, promiscuous or domesticated, but in any case dependent, because society has forced them into narrowly defined roles. The Lucías of these episodes are the promise of a new age, embodying personal as well as social liberation. Once we reach the contemporary episode we are faced with an entire female population who are aware of themselves as independent human beings. The contrast is no longer between the independent woman and the large numbers of her exploited sisters, but rather between the women who are exercising their independence and the one who cannot because of her traditional husband.

But the differences in the movie do not reside simply in the dichotomy of past and present. Each episode presents a different stage in the liberation of women. In the first, Lucía is an outsider to political action, merely a sympathizer to the revolution. Only when she is deeply and personally betrayed, losing her brother and lover at once, does she become a political creature, executing the traitor. She was different from the other women to begin with, and in gaining political consciousness she is still an exception. In the second episode, Lucía is introduced to the political arena through her lover. She becomes a partner to his revolutionary activities and begins agitation on her own. As a political activist she is working with whole groups of equally committed women. In the final episode, the entire female population is liberated and politically mobilized. Unlike her predecessors who were introduced to political action by their lovers, the modern Lucía is held back by her husband. She is political in and of herself and will ultimately settle for nothing less than total recognition by him of her personal integrity. Once social relationships are transformed, the only step remaining in the historical evolution of political consciousness is the liberation of personal relationships.

Many people have come to believe that feminist socialism is potentially the most important revolutionary movement in the world. *Lucía* plays a role in that movement and takes its place as a document of the women's movement and of the political struggle going on in the Third World—a distinction that only a Westerner would make.

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COMRADE GEORGE

By James D. Cockcroft

Comrade George. An Investigation into the Life, Political Thought, and Assassination of George Jackson by Eric Mann. New York: Harper & Row, Perennial Library, 1974; 204 pp., $1.95, paperback.

Remember George Jackson?

You may. But do your friends, relatives, fellow workers, students, or teachers remember George? One of the most perverse effects of media coverage of revolutionary struggles is that instant names and events are "produced," distorted, and then discarded —not only from the media, but from our own minds. Yet the struggles, groups, and people with whom such headline stories are associated continue to develop and grow. Indeed, part of the growth of the struggle is the passing on of the words, experiences, and examples of comrades like George Jackson. Therefore, Eric Mann's book *Comrade George*—with its factual rundown on George Jackson's life, assassination, and subsequent events surrounding his example and writings—is a weapon in struggle which should be widely circulated.

This book is the most inexpensive, compact account of George Jackson and the nationwide prison struggle available anywhere. It is also a calm and thoughtful examination of the anti-

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Jim Cockcroft teaches sociology at Livingston College. A past contributor to MR, he coordinates the Rutgers Community Prison Project and the Rutgers-Livingston Transnational Corporation Research Group.

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imperialist, anti-racist, anti-sexist, and party-led revolutionary politics which George Jackson did so much to help develop.

I first used *Comrade George* when it was available only from a movement press (Hovey Street Press), for a college class I taught on "Crime and Society." Students considered it the first "no bullshit book" on prisons they had read. The book has been so well received by prisoners and students that its paperback publication by a major commercial press creates an unusual opportunity for wider circulation of George's story, our story. Written in a lucid, layman's language, with some ethnic and street lingo where appropriate, *Comrade George* has an immediate impact on all readers. My students expressed gratitude at finally having the full story of George Jackson laid out, and commented on the book's having caused them to think through all the problems raised by "the movement" of the sixties.

Eric Mann, himself an ex-prisoner, addresses much of the book to fellow prisoners. Mann's enlightened statements on sexism and racism pull no punches: e.g., "the ones who make the most faggot jokes are the ones who locked you up where you are. We have been brainwashed about everything else, so check this out." Why the brainwashing? "The major newspapers are multimillion dollar corporations, owned by a handful of wealthy people who hobnob and share common values and interests with other wealthy people." And, after recounting the sexual deprivations of prisoners, Mann comments on George Jackson's occasional male chauvinism with female visitors: "We shouldn't be disappointed that George was less than the perfect embodiment of his ideals. He was part of the revolution, not above it." In fact, there is a welcome critical tone throughout the book, even about George and Jonathan Jackson as well as the author himself, which goes far toward demythologizing the movement and its leaders while communicating the problems and lessons involved.

Yet not one ounce of sympathy is spared for those social reformers and affluent careerists who might find in the author's willingness to criticize the Left an opening for their kind of sell-out, opportunist politics of "nonviolence" at any cost. Drawing on his own experiences, Eric Mann treats with remarkable sensibility the problems confronting well-intentioned whites. The chapter on Stephen Bingham, lawyer-son of a New England plutocrat-judge, raises so many issues as to be devastating. The question is not whether Bingham smuggled George Jackson a weapon or a wig or whatever poppycock the prison officials, through the press,

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might feed us, but rather what difficult decisions face professionals like Bingham who wish to contribute to revolutionary change. "Facing those decisions of sacrifice and risk is difficult for us middle-class people, but it is essential if we are to fight our way out of our own prison."

After exposing the "official story" of George Jackson's death, Mann explains the reasons for "the conspiracy to kill George Jackson." The main motives were to attack the black prisoners' movement; to remove a catalyst for a revolutionary alliance of black, brown, and white prisoners; to destroy George as a key link between prisoners and the Black Panther Party; to silence George's writing; to prevent George's coming to public trial (thousands were following the case, and George's fellow-accused were later acquitted); most important of all, "to continue their systematic policy of assassinating black leaders," a policy that flowed mysteriously but certainly from "Nixon and Kissinger and the CIA" to "the lowly guards in the Adjustment Center."

Remember the San Quentin Six? They are six black and brown brothers who, in addition to Bingham, were indicted in an effort to *cover up* George's assassination. Mann meticulously takes apart the frameup of the Six, exposing its real motives and its deliberate racism. As throughout the book, Mann brings these revolutionaries to individual life so that we will never again forget Fleeta Drumgo, David Johnson, Hugo Pinell, Johnny Larry Spain, Luis Talamantez, and Willie Tate.

Comrade George also shows why prison struggles with outside support constitute a crucial part of the revolutionary process. Using quotations from George Jackson's writings, Mann elaborates the links between prisoners and communities, racism and working-class divisions, capitalism and mass imprisonment of oppressed national minorities and dissenters, imperialism abroad and the oppression of people at home. At the same time Mann recognizes the dangers of "spontaneism" and insurrectionary actions which lack a popular base. His chapter on Jackson's *Blood in My Eye* is a particularly sensitive critique, very useful for small study groups. What is helpful in Mann's discussion is its correct channeling of issues and choices, posed in human as well as political terms, and quite Marxian in its avoidance of romanticism, sectarianism, or dogmatism.

While the book as a whole confirms the need for Marxists to work with prisoners, I will select here just one passage that illustrates Mann's position:

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No effective revolutionary organization can be built without a strong base in the prisons. The prisons attract some of the most dynamic and angry oppressed people. Prisoners as a group provide a militant catalyst for an overall movement, examples of courage and racial alliance in the face of a common oppressor. Many prisoners have developed incredible strengths in dealing with the state, and with themselves. They understand only too well that the government ultimately rules by armed force, and they can help bring that understanding to other oppressed people who would prefer to avoid that frightening but ultimately liberating truth. No effective movement in the prisons can be built without deep ties to a strong movement in the streets . . . community-based groups who could put at least a little heat on the prison administrations from outside the walls. (pp. 97-98, 100)

Finally, by making the last chapter an analytical statement by the Red Prison Movement, Mann poses many correct questions and challenges with which all of us involved in the struggle must deal. The RPM statement takes dead aim on the "cool-out" programs being hustled by the career liberals and suddenly concerned corporate executives, as well as on "the jive, professional prisoner" and the weekend student demonstrator. RPM recognizes that "committees working out of offices" are not enough. "We need a people's movement in the communities and factories and schools and hospitals with an overall revolutionary perspective." It wisely advises that if prisoners make strategy "based on outside support," they should "count on *less* support than they are promised." And it concludes:

Sometimes the most effective strategy may be one of lying low . . . doing political education . . . preparing people to get out as fast as possible and help build the struggle in the streets. At other times a protest or rebellion may be the best strategy. . . . We are out here for you. You are in there for us. We will keep up our work out here as you will in there, the best we can, continuing the fight against despair, insanity, and imperialism. So take care of yourselves, and hold on. Love, RPM.

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A VALUABLE STUDY OF IMPERIALIST DOMINATION

By James F. Petras

Guatemala, edited by Susanne Jonas and David Tobis. North American Congress for Latin America, New York and Berkeley, 1974. 264 pp., $5.

In many ways this is one of the best case studies of imperial-capitalist exploitation available in recent times. It is an in-depth detailed account of the complex ways in which U.S. imperialism shapes the political and social structure of a country in an effort to exploit raw materials, labor, and markets. The rich documentation is based on a host of official government (U.S.) sources as well as those emanating from international financial institutions and interviews with key policy-makers. The study is broken down into six sections, each of which deals with a critical aspect of the process of class-formation and imperial exploitation. Part One discusses the concentration of land ownership and the process by which Indian lands were expropriated and transferred first to European colonists and later to the United Fruit Company. The "recruitment" of a captive Indian labor force and the forms of labor exploitation under imperial capital domination are described and illustrated in an interview with a rank-and-file rural worker ("my ancestors were born here in Guatemala"). The issue of class-ethnic stratification is discussed, though the conflicting emphasis (whether to stress common class bonds or ethnic ties) is not resolved.

The third section, dealing with the Revolution (1944-1954) and the counter-revolution (1954), is a thorough discussion of the accomplishments and limitations of "liberal" and "national" capitalist reform efforts in the context of dependent capitalist societies. The essays spell out the legislative and structural changes initiated by Arévalo and especially by Arbenz (agrarian reform, legalization of unions, abolition of coercive labor) and the various

James Petras, a frequent contributor to MR, is the co-author of *The United States and Chile: Imperialism and the Overthrow of the Allende Government,* published last month by MR Press.

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forms of opposition organized by the United States. As the authors note, there are striking similarities to recent U.S. activity preceding the Chilean coup. What emerges from this discussion is the precariousness of any "revolutionary" alliance based on the national bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, the unreliability of any social force other than the workers and peasants in carrying out even a thorough "national democratic" revolution. Through a careful discussion of the movements of the various social strata at different historical moments, the writers describe the polarization of social forces, the defection of the bourgeoisie and layers of the petty bourgeoisie, and the increasingly impossible position of the "national democrat" Arbenz, who attempted to straddle the contradictions. The detailed discussion of the U.S. role before and after the counter-revolution presents us with copious material documenting the *permeable* nature of the "democratic state"—and thus its vulnerability. The practical unstated political conclusion derived from this account is that the transformation of an imperial-dominated capitalist state can only be carried out by "the dictatorship of the proletariat"—that is, under a regime which eliminates the political and social access points within society which facilitate imperial counter-revolution. U.S. imperial policy formation, the convergence of efforts by U.S. corporations and the state, the elaboration of regional organizations, and development plans to foster imperial-capital accumulation and their impact on political institutions and the class structure are all spelled out in great detail in sections dealing with the counter-revolution and the extraction of the society's surplus.

The contradictions engendered by imperial-capital domination have led to armed struggle *and* U.S.-directed mass terror. Here the authors provide a lucid account of the U.S. counter-insurgency program and its effects on the political and social organizations of the workers and peasants. The last section contains the biographies of the top 20 families within the Guatemalan bourgeoisie (their kinship, political, and social ties) that give flesh and substance to the notion of a ruling class. It would be useful to have a more specific analysis of the ties of these bourgeois forces with the operations, policies, and agencies of U.S. imperialism.

This discussion of Guatemala has of course greater and wider importance: through its wealth of historical and statistical material it lays to rest all notions of peaceful transitions; moreover, it refutes conclusively all those dogmatic assertions that continuously

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reappear prescribing "revolutions in stages," led by the "progressive bourgeoisie." While the book refrains from directly confronting revisionist theses, it is the only reasonable and logical conclusion derivable from the facts and analysis presented. This is a valuable book not only for what it tells us about Guatemala but also as an example of the serious and thorough way in which research of this kind should be carried out.

AN AFRICAN NOVEL OF LIBERATION

By Susan Kaplow

God's Bits of Wood by Ousmane Sembene. Doubleday & Co., Garden City, New York; Anchor paperback, 1970, 360 pp. $1.95.

There are many fine African novels which have added to our understanding of colonialism and its legacy. None, however, explores the ambiguities of the colonial situation with as much sensitivity and political acumen as Ousmane Sembene's *God's Bits of Wood*. Few others show the common people of Africa as united, militant, intelligent—and successful—in their resistance. The novel is based on a historical incident, the 1947 strike of the African railway workers' union in French West Africa. Workers from Bamako to Dakar joined the strike, which received support from other African labor groups and from the largest French union, the Communist-controlled Confédération Générale du Travail.

Disappointed in their expectations of the better working conditions that progressive developments in postwar France had seemed to promise, the railroad men struck for parity with French workers: equal pay for equal work, a minimum wage, an eight-hour day, family allowances. Although the strikers were partially victorious,

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it took nearly a decade more of legislative haggling and strikes to secure these benefits for the wage earners of French West Africa. Sembene, now a film-maker and writer, brings to this subject past experience as a plumber, bricklayer, docker, and trade-union leader in both his native Senegal and France.

Set in three urban centers of what are now Mali and Senegal, *God's Bits of Wood* depicts an Africa totally integrated into a world economy and a world polity. Within memory of the oldest characters in the novel, the incursions of the capitalist market system destroyed the community in which people had hitherto satisfied their basic material needs. They came to count for the necessities of life on the work of geographically remote strangers, a precarious position of dependence on the French colonizers, who controlled both the commodities themselves and the means of their distribution. "From here to Koulikoro, everything that moves belongs to them. Even our lives belong to them," one of the workers notes.

The culture of the oppressor invaded along with his political and economic hold. Africans find it natural to speak French to one another; the old crafts pale before the shine of cheap imports; schools teach shame of things African, and worship of life as lived in French movies. Dominance precludes real relationships between black and white, making even the best intentions appear as slavishness on the one hand, naiveté on the other. Fat *imams* and soft-living politicians sniff after their colonial masters, calling their rule the will of Allah or a civilizing mission.

Many writers, novelists and others, have described and analyzed the destructive, wrenching effects of colonialism. Sembene's originality and subtlety lie in his ability to reveal the progressive potential of the situation while constantly reminding us of its terrible human cost. In breaking the unity of the traditional community, the market economy and the wage relationship have clarified and simplified class relations. A working class is emerging, whose members have the capacity to identify their common interests and to come together around them. Through the very machines which have enforced its dependence on the colonizer, this working class gains the possibility of freeing people from their timeless, endless struggle for survival. Through the very language which reinforces the oppressor's cultural hegemony, this working class gains access to universal concepts and values with which to interpret and act on changing conditions, with which to judge the actions of others.

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"This strike is like a school for all of us," one of the leaders says, a school in which the workers learn a new consciousness based on their new class position. The first thing the strike teaches them is that colonialism has killed the past—"when all of Africa was just a garden for food"—and that the machines which they themselves run will unequivocally dominate the new age. Out of their loneliness for the cars and wheels and motors from which the strike separates them, out of their sense of power at having stilled the trains' roar, out of their fear of the famine to come, the workers realize that they are strong because they move the machines, but weak because they do not own them. The more deeply involved they become in the long strike, the more fully do the railwaymen come to see things in class terms. Strike support from an ethnic group they have traditionally scorned causes them to overcome their long-held prejudice. They puzzle over and solve the riddle of why some Europeans send them money to carry on the strike which other Europeans are trying so hard to break. During negotiations with the railroad's directors, the strike-committee members see through and challenge the assertion that their action represents a blow against France: "'*Monsieur le directeur*,' Lahbib said, 'you do not represent a nation or a people here, but simply a class. We represent another class, whose interests are not the same as yours.'"

As the progress of the strike faces them with circumstances and choices to which inherited wisdom is largely irrelevant, the workers are forced to evolve new behavior and new standards. Initially, for instance, they meet strikebreakers with physical violence but soon reject this as unpolitical and ineffective. Using the French revolutionary classic *Man's Fate* as a guide, the leaders propose instead to disgrace a notorious scab by trying him in public.

At first the thought of a trial is frightening and repugnant to the workers, who are unused to pronouncing judgment on others and unfamiliar with such procedures. In addition, the man to be tried is older and more respected in the community than most of them. The tribunal, to which the workers eventually agree, obliges every participant to act as his "own man," a new experience for the majority. Through it and through involvement in other strike decisions comes to some of the men the "astonishing discovery of [their] own worth as human being[s]."

To the development of the workers' political consciousness Sembene counterpoints the growing militancy of their wives and other female relatives. The opening scenes of the novel suggest

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that the introduction of the wage relationship has hardly altered the traditional place of women as housekeepers and child rearers. Outside employment, through which the men gain money and technical knowledge, has rather sharpened the distinction, already existent in pre-colonial times, between the male and female spheres. By and large, the wives are "docile, submissive, and hardworking," expecting little emotional support from their husbands, knowing nothing of their activities.

Colonialism has added the distortion of Western culture to the bonds of the African heritage. An apt pupil at the white man's school, N'Deye Touti has learned contempt for her people, embarrassment at the unconfined bodies of the women. She daydreams of the rich Prince Charming who will carry her away to the sanitized, deodorized world of bourgeois comfort she reads about in French magazines. But, in the same moment, colonialism has opened the wedge for the flowering of Ad'jibid'ji, the spirited, perceptive young daughter of the strike's principal leader. Refusing her assigned place, this eight-year-old takes a passionate interest in the affairs of the men and craves a future as driver of "the fast trains." "She wanted to cry out that she was free and independent. She wished she might explain that word—independence."

When the strike is declared, the women passively accept it as the men's business, hoping vaguely that victory may bring improved living conditions. Quickly, however, their daily, usually unsuccessful search for food and water (the French have turned off the municipal water supply) radicalizes the women. Their early attempts to secure food by theft and trickery swell into a series of pitched battles against the police, each episode serving to further anger and unite the women. Under the strong leadership of one of their number, a group of women march the many miles from Thies to Dakar to demonstrate support for the strike. Hailed and honored along the way, they are greeted in Dakar with the welcome usually reserved for warriors.

Though they equal their husbands in courage and ardor, the women have a political consciousness which is less developed. The men discuss the changed nature of production, class antagonisms and class solidarity, in addition to strike strategy. The women speak only of the immediate situation. This difference in consciousness derives from the divergent nature of their positions. Directly involved in the wage relationship and with the agents of colonialism, the men take action and thought from the contradictions they thus experience. The women, on the other hand, are moved more in-

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directly, as a result of their efforts to cope with a situation created by the men's strike. Explaining the origins of one woman's newfound bravery, Sembene writes:

It was not the war; Ramatoulaye was not a man and knew nothing of the rancors that well up in soldiers on the march. It was not the factory; she had never been subject to the inhuman dictatorship of machines. It was not even in the too frequent association of men; she had only known those of her own family. Where then? The answer was as simple as the woman herself. It had been born beside a cold fireplace, in an empty kitchen.

Because famine will end but the wage relationship will endure, the women's commitment is perhaps less firmly grounded than the men's. Similarly, one wonders if the changes Sembene depicts in male-female relations will outlast the situation which sparked them. The strikers are quick to comprehend the crucial nature of their wives' support, both material and emotional. As the women become more active, they begin to speak at public meetings, an impossibility up to this time. The strike committee takes a female member and encourages the women's march to Dakar. The progressive leaders of the strike persuade the men to abandon "old feudal customs" and to look for food and water along with their wives. Both men and women sense that something important is altering their feelings for and behavior toward one another.

The changes are ambivalent, partial. Men grant privileges—to speak at meetings, to sit on the strike committee—rather than women demanding rights. Yet a liberating dynamic is at play, bringing unanticipated results about which the men have mixed feelings. As one of them comments about the marchers to Dakar:

The women got a big welcome when they came back, of course, but now the men are having all sorts of trouble with them. At first, they even pounced on me like tigresses—they wanted to start running everything! But things are a little calmer now. . . . In future, though, we will have to reckon with them in whatever we do.

On the personal level, the alterations are also initiated by the men. Bakayoko, the most political of the strikers, determines to change his rather conservative view of marriage and his distant, uninvolved relationship with his wife, Assitan. At the end of the novel, he offers to teach her French and, rather than go as usual with his male friends, takes her and their daughter Ad'jibid'ji to the festivities marking the strike's successful conclusion. Although the

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author struck a joyous note with this ending, it made me uneasy. What compelling force will keep Bakayoko and the other men from reverting to old ways once the memory of the strike fades?

The answer can lie only in the women themselves. The strike has made them conscious of their own valor and capacity for independent action, transforming a latent female solidarity into collective militancy. On this basis, the women may go forward to struggle against both colonialism and their own particular oppressions. The preconditions are developing in this novel; for the rest, we need a book about Ad'jibid'ji.

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(*Continued from inside front cover*)

On April 25th in Richmond, British Columbia, Donald Barnett, co-author with Karari Njama of MR Press book *Mau Mau From Within: An Analysis of Kenya's Peasant Revolt,* died of a heart attack at the early age of 45. An anthropologist who gave up an academic career to devote himself to the cause of the underdeveloped countries, Don was founder and first Chairman of Liberation Support Movement, based in Richmond.

A letter dated May 9th from Ruth Spahn Sibley informs us of the sudden death, two days earlier, from a stroke of her husband, J. F. Sibley, in San Diego. The Sibleys, who celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in May 1974, have been life-long socialists and over the years have been among MR's most faithful correspondents and supporters.

We mourn the deaths of these three vastly different human beings, each of whom in his own way was devoted to the struggle for a better world, and our deep sympathy goes to all their families and friends.

This issue of MR will reach readers late, and so will the double (July-August) summer issue. The latter will consist of articles on China by the editors and a chapter on the formation of Mao's economic strategy to 1949, from a forthcoming MR Press work by John Gurley, Professor of Economics at Stanford, entitled *Essays on China's Economy and Mao's Strategy.* Please don't write asking what's happened to your copy of the July-August issue: chances are it will be along some time near the mid-point of the two-month period.

As we have stated in these Notes before, when space permits we are glad to announce new publications which are likely to be of interest to many MR readers and which they may not hear of in the normal course of events. Here are some recent examples:

(1) *Caliban: A Journal of New World Thought and Writing,* edited by Robert Márquez, who edited the recently published MR Press book *Latin American Revolutionary Poetry: A Bilingual Anthology. Caliban* is "a semi-annual of essays, short fiction, poetry, and the visual arts from South America, the Caribbean, and the United States' own domestic 'Third World.'" Regular one-year subscription is $5 in the United States, $6 elsewhere, and $10 for libraries and institutions. The address is P.O. Box 797, Amherst, Mass. 01002.

(2) *Estrategia: Revista de Análisis Político,* of which one of the editors is MR Press author Alonso Aguilar (*Pan-Americanism from Monroe to the Present: A View from the Other Side*). A one-year subscription is 100 pesos in Mexico, $10 in the United States and elsewhere. The address is Apartado Postal 73-206, Mexico 13, D.F., Mexico.

(3) *Latin American Perspectives,* managing editor, Ronald H. Chilcote. A one-year subscription (3 issues) is $10 for individuals; students and unemployed, $7.50. Foreign, add $1 for regular and $10 for air mail. The address is: c/o CMSI, P.O. Box 792, Riverside, Calif. 92502.

(4) A recent issue of the *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* is devoted to Asian women. It can be ordered for $2 per copy (available at discount in bulk) from the *Bulletin,* 604 Mission St., Room 1001, San Francisco, Calif. 94105 (Attention: Jon Livingston).

From time to time we receive a bequest from a reader who felt, in his or her lifetime, that financial support would help make possible the continuance of MR as a completely independent magazine. Any reader who may be moved to follow this example should be careful to state exactly, in the will, that the bequest is to "Monthly Review, Inc., of 62 West 14th Street, New York, N.Y. 10011."

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